

later i recall that this is  
the way it was growing up  
in upstate new york:  
people were always looking  
for ways to help each other  
out. it made you feel good  
to plow a neighbor's lawn or  
shovel his car out or mow his  
grass or run an errand for someone  
who was old or sick or disabled

i don't notice much of that  
anymore, except for those who are  
ready and willing to put you  
out of your misery.

#### AFTER VIEWING ZEFFIRELLI'S JANE EYRE

my uncle lost his wife to tuberculosis  
when she was still quite young  
and very beautiful. she had, in  
fact, been a legendary beauty,  
one of those women whose name,  
among her family and friends  
is virtually synonymous with beauty.

it was expected that he would be  
inconsolable.

but shortly thereafter he re-married,  
this time with their longtime housekeeper,  
a likeable, competent, notoriously  
plain woman.

he was quite well off,  
an engineer for a prominent electronics firm,  
and he could presumably have had his choice  
of many women.

but he and his second wife  
had an excellent marriage.  
it might even be said,  
in the manner of the fairy tales,  
that they lived happily ever after.

as a child this seemed a mystery to me,  
but today i am tempted to regard him as  
among the wisest of men.